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President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 107

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Draft resolution (A/72/L.1)

The President: This meeting is held in accordance with resolutions 70/179, of 17 December 2015, and 71/287, of 4 May 2017.

I warmly welcome everyone to this high-level meeting, which will appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in order to assess achievements, gaps and challenges, including in the implementation of the relevant legal instruments.

The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/72/L.1, entitled "Political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons".

Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that action on the draft political declaration will be taken following the statement by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Statement by the President

The President: I would like to welcome and thank everyone for their presence and engagement.

This weekend I was deeply moved by my conversation with Ms. Shireen Ibrahim, a Yazidi woman and advocate who survived human trafficking at the hands of terrorists. Her dignity, human rights and person were violated. Her story shows the horrors and complexity of this scourge. But most important, it is a sombre reminder that we are talking about people here.

We are not holding this meeting to cross it off our checklist. We are here to track the progress that we have made so far and to see how much further we have to go in order to eliminate human trafficking forever. Today we recommit to the fight against all forms of human trafficking. We pledge, once again, our respect for the human rights and dignity of our people. The draft declaration to be adopted today shows our political will to end human trafficking. But that will must be manifested in actions. Only then will it be meaningful for the people affected. In that regard, I would like to highlight three main points.

First, a focus on people in this context means an approach centred on victims and survivors. It also means upholding the human rights and dignity of people like Shireen Ibrahim, Grizelda Grootboom and many others. I pause to pay special tribute to the victims and survivors, some of whom are with us here today. Their presence reminds us of the reason that we are here — so that people can live freely and peacefully and free from the threat of human trafficking. For those victims and

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survivors who do not have a platform, we have a duty to be their voice. That is why the United Nations is here.

Secondly, we must strengthen our prevention efforts. Today's global peace and security challenges amplify the risk of human trafficking. We need to address the root causes. Shireen Ibrahim's story underscores what we already know: conflict prevention helps to prevent human trafficking. The chasm between peace and war has many perils, and human trafficking is one of them. Conflicts and humanitarian disasters force millions to flee their homes. With human trafficking and migration following similar geographical patterns, some get caught at the ever-shifting intersection of the two. Furthermore, we are confronted by terrorists and criminals who have no regard for human suffering. They thrive on the instability created by conflicts and humanitarian crises. A lack of strong institutions and the absence of the rule of law allow human trafficking to continue with impunity. We also know that those groups derive financing from this criminal enterprise.

Those are but a few aspects of human trafficking. The full picture is complex and many-sided, but what is common across the whole spectrum is that prevention is better than the cure. Poverty, human rights violations, food insecurity and other vulnerabilities fuel the flames of human trafficking. The financial benefits provide the oxygen. We must starve traffickers of benefits while addressing both the demand and supply side of the problem. For that, we need all hands on deck for what we in the United Nations call a multi-stakeholder approach.

Thirdly, those most at risk among us require our special attention. Women, children, internally displaced persons and refugees are among the most vulnerable to human trafficking. Approximately 79 per cent of all detected victims are women and children. Human trafficking's focus on women and children threatens to unravel the fabric of our society. It rolls back the progress that we have made. Therefore, we must put the spotlight on those who are most vulnerable to trafficking.

Lastly and importantly, we have many plans and instruments at hand. We must take further concerted action to achieve a world free of human trafficking. Our plans include, first, the Global Plan of Action; secondly, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Sustainable Development Goals — Goals 5, 8 and 16 call on us to end human trafficking, with particular emphasis on women, children and decent work; and, fourthly, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted at the 2016 United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants.

Another important instrument is the draft political declaration to be adopted today. I thank the Permanent Representatives of Qatar and Belgium for their invaluable efforts, which have led us to this consensual outcome. I urge States to continue their contributions to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The fund is an important part of our commitment to help victims and survivors recover from this crime, reclaim their dignity and minimize the risk of revictimization and retrafficking. Resources must match the scale of the challenges that we face in fighting human trafficking.

Human trafficking knows no borders. It affects people in the North and the South, and has many faces. We have made progress, but we have much further to go. Our goal is zero trafficking. Let us commit to stronger cooperation for decisive global action and leave the abhorrent trade in human beings in the past forever.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I thank the General Assembly for convening this important meeting on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and I congratulate members of the Assembly on their successful deliberations on the draft political declaration to be adopted this morning.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, tens of millions of people are victims of forced labour, sexual servitude, recruitment as child soldiers or other forms of exploitation and abuse. Human trafficking is all around us, in every region of the world. It grips the weakest and most vulnerable. Women and girls, but also boys, are cruelly exploited for sex and vital organs. Children are forced into endless begging, and men into brutal labour. Countless businesses, in the global North and South alike, benefit from the misery. From construction to food production, to consumer goods, a great many enterprises are tainted by this stain. Often, trafficking is intertwined with racial, gender and other forms of discrimination.

In recent years, increasing conflict, insecurity and economic uncertainty have brought about new tests. As millions of children, women and men spill out of their countries towards safety, they find themselves at the mercy of merciless people. Thousands of people have died at sea, in deserts or detention centres and at the hands of wretched traffickers. Criminal networks have used the disorder and despair in the world to expand their brutality and reach. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh and Boko Haram continue to seek the capture and enslavement of women, girls and boys. Others use their victims for forced labour.

Those gangs and groups are global, well organized, technologically savvy and highly proficient at taking advantage of gaps in governance and weaknesses in institutions. We must be equally determined in countering this menace. Too often, human traffickers operate with impunity and receive much less attention than, for example, drug traffickers. That must change. I have seen many drug lords in jail, and rightly so. I have never seen a human-trafficking lord in jail.

Fighting human trafficking requires us to make greater use of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, to which the President just referred, as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and other relevant instruments. It also requires much stronger cooperation among Member States, making use of the full range of their instruments.

Because traffickers prey on vulnerable and marginalized people, the problem can seem remote from those members of society who are more fortunate, including political decision-makers. By contrast, the threat of illicit drugs typically feels very close, and therefore receives attention and resources from all Governments.

I remember that when I was Prime Minister of Portugal, almost 20 years ago, I always thought that one day my children could fall victim to illicit drugs. I never thought they could fall victim to human trafficking. That is probably why, with a great deal of commitment, my Government introduced a drug policy that even today is considered by many to be a reference point. But we did not do enough with regard to human trafficking.

It is clear to me that it is our responsibility as leaders to make human trafficking a real priority for international cooperation. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted last year, was a welcome step. Next year's General Assembly conference aimed at adopting a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will be a further potential milestone.

Refugees and migrants are especially vulnerable, and their plight is only compounded when they are treated as criminals by their host Governments and communities. The international community must create legal and safe migration channels, and, in combating trafficking, we must simultaneously uphold the right of refugees to asylum. International cooperation is essential, including for information-sharing, law enforcement and legal assistance. The Security Council has adopted important resolutions targeting the financing of both terrorists and traffickers.

We must strengthen support to victims, particularly through the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, which provides crucial assistance to survivors. No one should have to confront the trauma of their experiences alone. A survivor-centred approach is critical.

Yet another tool is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which addresses some of the root causes that make people vulnerable to trafficking. Often, trafficking is abetted by poverty and inequality. Fighting trafficking and advancing sustainable, inclusive development go hand in hand.

Our efforts should also involve awareness campaigns. The more people know about the dangers of trafficking, the better equipped they can be to avoid its horrors.

As long as this crime exists we cannot tell young people that the future will be better than the past. We cannot deliver on a world of hope and opportunity for all, and we dare not look at ourselves without a sense of abiding shame. Now is the time to stand together and stamp out this abominable practice.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/287, I now give the floor to Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Fedotov (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime): The Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons remains a keystone of our

collective action. This appraisal and the draft political declaration we are about to adopt can help to take that commitment forward and to sharpen responses to an odious crime that continues to exploit and victimize the most vulnerable persons in all parts of the world.

Since the General Assembly adopted the landmark Global Plan of Action, in 2010, we have strengthened efforts to prevent and stop this crime, most of all through the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. To date, 171 Member States have acceded to the Protocol, and most of them align their domestic laws with its provisions.

In the Global Plan of Action, the Assembly entrusted the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with preparing biennial global reports on trafficking in persons. Our research has made it clear that aligning legislation with the Protocol is helpful in improving criminal justice responses. Nevertheless, enforcement gaps remain. I completely agree with the Secretary-General about the low conviction rates of the real trafficking lords and our need to do more. That is fully confirmed in the UNODC biennial reports.

New technologies are being abused to facilitate human trafficking, thereby further straining capacities to detect and investigate this crime. The Security Council has highlighted the threat posed by human trafficking to international peace and security, and the Council remains engaged in addressing this crime in the context of armed conflict. Going forward, we need to do more to translate that high level of awareness into more effective action and to make better use of the established international legal framework to protect victims and ensure justice.

I am honoured by the Assembly's recognition of the institutional role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the global fight against human trafficking. UNODC remains fully engaged in working with our United Nations partners and other partners to support Member States in preventing trafficking in persons and in implementing victim-centred criminal justice responses.

We need to strengthen data collection in order to build a robust evidence base. We must also work together towards a common framework for defining and assessing progress, taking into account the anti-trafficking targets under the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, Goals 5.2, on trafficking in women and girls; 8.7, on forced labour; and 16.2, on trafficking and all forms of violence against children. To support that, UNODC is currently working with the academic community to develop innovative methodologies to measure and understand the dimensions and scope of the trafficking problem. At the same time, we must coordinate support so as to be as coherent, efficient and effective as possible, including through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

We need Governments to develop the necessary research to put laws into practice, support victims, train practitioners and enable inter-agency and cross-border cooperation. In line with the Protocol, we must help States parties address challenges that make people — especially women and children — vulnerable to trafficking, including poverty, underemployment and the lack of equal opportunity.

Finally, I urge members to pledge support to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, established by the Global Plan of Action. The fund is providing meaningful direct assistance, but its impact will fall short of its potential if it does not receive the necessary resources. I have heard that some Member States will announce generous new pledges to the trust fund. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them in advance for their generous offers. Please help us to amplify the support to enable more trafficking victims to become survivors.

The President: The Assembly will now turn to draft resolution A/72/L.1, entitled "Political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons". We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution.

In connection with this draft resolution, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Abelian (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and has been distributed desk-to-desk and made available on the PaperSmart portal.

Under the terms of paragraph 12 of draft resolution A/72/L.1, the General Assembly would stress the need to ensure overall organization and coherence in

the efforts of the United Nations system to respond to trafficking in persons, especially in ensuring support to Member States. In that regard, while recalling that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) was established to foster coordination and cooperation among the relevant United Nations system entities and other international organizations involved in combating trafficking in persons, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as its coordinator, the Assembly would urge the Secretary-General to continue efforts to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system and to inform Member States thereof through existing reporting channels.

Under the terms of paragraph 13 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would recognize the important role played in the United Nations system by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, and invite it to continue to increase its activities related to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and, to that end, to incorporate aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relevant to preventing and combating trafficking in persons and to consider how future activities will be coordinated and how the duplication of efforts will be avoided. The Assembly would encourage the Coordination Group to expand its working group to include entities of the United Nations system that are not currently active in the working group but that have a role in addressing trafficking in persons.

With regard to paragraphs 12 and 13, it should be noted that currently there are two Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officers at the P-4 level allocated to the implementation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime core mandates relating to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Those staff resources were approved in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 pursuant to resolution 64/293, adopting the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, to perform the following activities. One Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer is dedicated to all technical assistance for the implementation of both the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Protocols, as well as the Global Plan of Action, and one Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer is dedicated to the preparation of the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. Those regular budget staff resources are fully devoted to already mandated programme activities. Therefore, there are no staff resources available that could be redeployed to perform additional tasks or activities.

Also with regard to paragraphs 12 and 13, UNODC would need to continue its coordination of the expanded network of agencies involved in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. That includes substantive support and facilitation in many areas — joint policy development, information sharing, involvement in the advocacy, outreach and coordination activities of ICAT member agencies and developing annual ICAT work plans; preparing, servicing and coordinating meetings and calls, including the drafting of documentation and meeting records related thereto; coordinating briefing events, advocacy and reporting; compiling, disseminating and storing relevant information among member agencies; engaging and supervising consultants; and record-keeping and day-to-day communication with ICAT members and ICAT external stakeholders.

In 2012, an extrabudgetary contribution of $600,000 allowed UNODC to undertake a series of technical assistance and advocacy activities related to the implementation of ICAT and the Global Plan of Action. Those included holding regular teleconferences and working group meetings to exchange information among the various agencies; the organization of expert group meetings to review relevant issues; the launch of three ICAT thematic papers; the finalization of two additional papers setting out the joint positions of the agencies involved on key issues relating to the Protocol and the Global Plan of Action; and advocacy events in Geneva, New York and Vienna on the work of ICAT.

Extrabudgetary resources in the amount of $180,900 would be required to hire one Programme Officer at the P-3 level in the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section to enable the continuation of UNODC coordination and support the implementation of the draft resolution. The position would provide the substantive support required for the continuation of the technical-assistance activities related to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the enhanced coordination of ICAT.

Those activities would be carried out, provided that additional extrabudgetary resources are made available. Should such extrabudgetary resources not be made available, in accordance with paragraph 26 of the draft resolution, consultations would need to be undertaken to determine the necessary programmatic changes and resource requirements needed for their implementation. Hence, the adoption of draft resolution A/72/L.1 would not entail any additional appropriation under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 or the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.1, entitled "Political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.1?

Draft resolution A/72/L.1 was adopted (resolution 72/1).

The President: I wish to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, and to Her Excellency Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qater to the United Nations, who so ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the informal consultations to bring them to a successful conclusion. I am sure that the members of the Assembly join me in extending our sincere appreciation to them.

We shall now continue with the statements in the opening segment of the high-level meeting.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/287, I now give the floor to Ms. Mira Sorvino, Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking.

Ms. Sorvino: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address the General Assembly. Since 2009, I have had the enormous honour to serve the United Nation as the Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

I have travelled the world with the UNODC Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking to encourage action and awareness. I have interviewed scores of survivors, who have broken my heart with the inhuman brutality they have endured, but who inspired me with their heroism and insights. I have also interviewed innovative Government actors and tirelessly altruistic non-governmental organization (NGO) workers — and even a trafficker, who spoke of his victims as if they were simply mercantile goods whose suffering meant nothing.

I had the privilege of being witness to and a minor participant in the drafting session for the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Some may remember my non-protocol, but heartfelt, outbursts about the fact that the victims and survivors I had met urgently needed the help of the Global Plan of Action and the voluntary trust fund, and that they could not wait another minute.

I spoke at the first assessment of the Global Plan of Action, in 2013 (see A/67/PV.77). Now, here at the second, I am very heartened to see the adoption of resolution 72/1. However, I feel compelled to urge everyone in this Hall not to rest on that proclamation, and to actually turn words into meaningful and robust action, which is long overdue for those millions still waiting in torment.

The political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) notes that the scale of global resourcing to fight trafficking in persons does not match that of the challenge. A just-released report from the International Labour Organization and International Organization for Migration estimates that, in 2016, 40.3 million people were victims of modern slavery. Women and girls accounted for 71 per cent, and a quarter of the victims were children.

What was the global response? The United States Government *Trafficking in Persons Report* indicates that in 2016 there were fewer than 10,000 convictions of human traffickers worldwide. That colossal failure to rescue and protect the world's most vulnerable is absolutely untenable.

At a time where it may seem out of fashion to side with the marginalized and the oppressed, members of the Assembly — the gathered guardians of the highest standards of moral governance — must not look away from the victims of human trafficking. That the fruit we enjoy on our table of plenty may be picked by slave hands, or that the young girls and boys we pass huddling

on a shadowy side street may be sexually trafficked, is something to which we must no longer turn a blind eye.

What is the modern definition of humankind's purpose if not to strive harder to uplift all members of the global community so that they can enjoy basic standards of human rights, freedom from exploitation and the promise of the pursuit of education and possibility? All of those aspirations lead to a freer, more stable, prosperous and peaceful world — and all are goals that Member States champion.

The current conditions of conflict and natural disaster are creating humanitarian crises and refugee migrations on what may be an unprecedented scale, with 60 million displaced persons and 20 million refugees. Human trafficking is their direct consequence, not just a side effect.

I applaud the Secretary-General's long-standing support of migrants and refugees. We must all look for ways to create immediate countermeasures to this direct pipeline to victimhood for those vulnerable people, and not just attempt damage control after the fact.

I applaud the fact that the declaration recognizes that the Global Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda, including the three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to combating human trafficking, are mutually reinforcing, and its promotion of that fact. I urge all Member States, along with civil society and the private sector, to vigorously employ the excellent recommendations of the Global Plan of Action. We have the means and the knowledge of best practices to fight and end human trafficking, but only if we deploy the moral urgency, enormous political will and robust financial resources that this dire situation calls for.

First, survivor leaders must be involved in all apects of policy development. There must be cooperation and shared information among Governments, and a firm commitment to root out corruption, which hampers efforts to fight trafficking and sometimes foments it. We need a trauma-, gender- and child-sensitive approach to all law-and-order responses; victim services that utilize the most advanced testimony-gathering technology, so as not to re-traumatize; and evidence-led investigations, including a capacity for undercover authority, so that witness testimony is not a case's only hope.

Other measures include ensuring that civil redress is included in, but does not replace, criminal proceedings for victims; Governments prioritizing the prosecution of trafficking and having it tried by specialist prosecutors who seek punishments commensurate with other severe crimes, not just easily paid fines; and the expungement of crimes that the victims were forced to commit while in bondage.

Society-wide training in identifying human-trafficking situations and victims is crucial, as are preventive curriculums for middle- and high school-age children, awareness campaigns for migrants and refugees, programmes targeting the demand side of sexual exploitation, partnerships with the private sector to root out slavery in corporate supply chains, in-depth Internet investigations to stop child sex trafficking, and actions to prevent debt bondage and penalize recruiters.

The list goes on, and we must see a parallel, vigorous attack on the root causes of vulnerability, such as gender inequality, cultural discrimination, poverty, access to clean water, education and economic opportunity.

If those of us here look at the table before them, they will find a Blue Heart pin representing the sadness of the victims and the cold-heartedness of their traffickers. The blue United Nations colour also demonstrates our commitment to combating this crime. We hope members will wear the Blue Heart to raise awareness of human trafficking and galvanize their commitment to fight it.

I would ask everyone to donate generously to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, which is a direct way for lifesaving and life-changing services to be delivered to victims and survivors globally through extremely well-vetted on-the-ground NGOs. As an Italo-American, I am proud to announce that Italy is donating $1 million to that vital fund today. I recently learned that I have DNA from many other regions, including Scandinavia, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and even sub-Saharan Africa. I am a true melting pot, and I specialized in East Asian studies in college. I will therefore happily acclaim and applaud all Member States that match or add to that gift.

We are all one community, and it is high time for us to do all that we can to protect and uplift the most vulnerable among us.

The President: In accordance with resolution 71/287, I now give the floor to Ms. Grizelda Grootboom from South Africa, as a representative of civil society.

Ms. Grootboom: My name is Grizelda Grootboom. I am from the Western Cape township of Khayelitsha. Being a street kid in Cape Town was to be a seeker after the journey that Nelson Mandela was also looking for. At the age of eight, we were all walking through the streets in District 6. When he screamed "Freedom!", we knew that we would get more freedom in the form of shelters and people finally giving us blankets and food. But that freedom was still a journey and a long walk for all street kids.

My journey ended in the hands of somebody who knew that I was desperate for hope and freedom. She was a friend. She decided to take my hope and turn it into a nightmare. She trafficked me all the way to Johannesburg. The first thing that I knew was that, as friends, we definitely shared the same dreams and hopes as black children. Walking into the house, which smelled so fresh and hopeful, I knew that that change was going to be the best change of my whole life. Taking a nap in an empty room with very fresh-smelling wooden floors, I knew that I was in safe hands.

The thing that woke me up was a punch and kick in the stomach. I thought that I was in the wrong house and tried to scream, but they began wrapping duct tape around my eyes and mouth, undressing me and injecting my legs with crystal meth behind my knees. The drug made my blood so thin that my eyes became foggy, and I could not hear the sounds of anything happening around my body. The only thing I felt was my heartbeat and the little spirit that I had inside me, hoping that she would come back. I realized that she was not going to come back only when the first client walked in, and they told him, "Fresh meat on the market".

That went on for at least two weeks. I began to count the seconds and the times my heart beat by the people — by the men who came in and the way they smelled. It is morning: he is coming from home. It is the afternoon: he probably just came from a business deal. The evening continued until the morning next day. I got kicked out of the house in the middle of the night and was replaced by a younger girl. I could smell her freshness and heard her trying to kick and bite hands over her mouth.

It was in the middle of the night, and I knew that my animal survival instincts needed to kick in. I did not know the Johannesburg streets. I did know that the first thing to do was to count the number of Mercedes-Benzes to know which map I was on. I first made it to the truck-stop area. There, we knew that a lot of clients were waiting. There, I looked for the first master, and he said, "Welcome to my city".

Between the ages of 18 to 26, I worked all around South Africa, in brothels, strip clubs and high- and low-end gentlemen's clubs. At the age of 26, I was working in Port Elizabeth. We were holding the greatest sports events in Africa. Everybody was at our brothel, all types of men, black, white, rich and poor. That year I got very used to the industry. I knew that if you pleased the madam, if you pleased the pimp, everybody was happy.

I became pregnant with Summer, my baby girl. I called her Summer because following every shift in the morning she would continue to kick. After six months, my madam said that that kind of breed was not welcome in that sick slave industry. Immediately, an in-house abortion took place. Three hours later, I was asked to return to work. I had to use a lot of cotton to prevent the blood from flowing into the client. That same minute was when I knew that the life that I thought I was going to have was taken from me and that I did not deserve health or life. Immediately, I said no, and because I refused my madam's next client, I was taken downstairs, beaten and driven all the way back to Johannesburg. I woke up in the hospital a month later, and my year of rehabilitation began.

That was the journey of my exit. It was really tough, because everybody thought that I wanted to be a sex slave. I did not have any identity, but everybody knew my nakedness. Consequently, at every door that I knocked on at the age of 27, I was made to know that it was my fault for being a sex slave. Well, the rest of my sisters knew that I was not going to make it out of society being a sex-slave statistic. Without wasting any time, I went back to the pimps. I became their drug trafficker from one city to another, until I got the opportunity to drop drugs in Cape Town — my hometown — and that was when the next journey of exit took place.

Today I stand here with the images of girls whom I have lost throughout the 18 years. I am blessed to be alive. I am blessed to feel healthy. But I am not blessed to see the headlines every time another young girl has been trafficked.

The sex-slave industry makes so much money in an hour that sometimes we used to think that by the age of 18 or 21 we were not going to be alive. My health reminds me every day that I was a sex slave, through

the boils, through HIV — and through the headaches, of course.

Sex slavery is a new thing that holds a new kind of oppression over women and girls all over the world. The people who run it are men, of course. In every brothel, in every pimp, you will find a man. The buyers are not interested in the slave's colour or age, as long as she is a woman or a girl. Apparently, right now in our society, sex slavery is the only thing that can sustain us economically, but every girl and woman loses the soul of dignity in her life through it.

The States Members of the United Nations are gathered here today to commit to implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Approximately 96 per cent of sex-trafficked human beings are women and girls. I was one of them. I often use the term "sex slavery" to describe what traffickers — every pimp and every madam — used to tell me. But most important, if anyone here had to see me on the corner, he or she would never say that I was a slave.

Sex slavery is just another form of oppression, especially for the black child. In South Africa we come from apartheid. We used to call it slavery. While I was a sex slave, people would suggest that I leave. I tried it so many times, but the conversation would always end up with the words "It is voluntary. You want to be there."

I am so grateful to the Secretary-General, to the President of the General Assembly and to the United Nations for the invitation to come here to speak. A survivor's voice is so important, not for just this gathering, but for young girls who are stuck in sex slavery, so that they may hear the hope that the United Nations can give them. I do not speak because I want to be a speaker or an activist. I do so because I understand every single aspect of the pain and bondage of being a sex slave.

I really hope that the Global Plan will not be just the action of putting pen to paper, but that it will inspire action in every rural township and city and country — but most of all for the human dignity of every young girl and woman.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for the opening segment of the high-level meeting.

Before proceeding further, I would like to remind members that the first interactive panel discussion, entitled "The Global Plan of Action and effective partnerships for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons: achievements, gaps and challenges, also taking into consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals", will take place this afternoon from 3 to 4 p.m. The second interactive panel discussion, entitled "The Global Plan of Action and effective partnerships for the protection of and assistance to victims, including through the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, also taking into consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals", will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. The interactive panel discussions will be held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. I would also like to remind members that the Chairs of the panel discussions will present summaries of the deliberations to the General Assembly at the closing plenary meeting, to be held in the afternoon of Thursday, 28 September.

Before we begin with the list of speakers, I would like to turn to some organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meetings. I would like to explain to all speakers that, in order to enable the maximum participation within the limited time available, speakers making statements in plenary meetings should be limited to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity, and to five minutes when speaking on behalf of a group of States, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in its resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by speakers to the time limits in the Assembly, particularly during high-level meetings.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the "all protocols observed" principle is recommended, whereby participants are encouraged to refrain from listing standard protocol expressions during their statements. In the light of the given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. I would appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements so that all those inscribed will be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the Minister of Justice of Luxembourg.

Mr. Braz (Luxembourg): I would first like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening today's

meeting. The fight against human trafficking must be fought on a global scale if we want it to be efficient. But all of us, every Member State of the international community, have to take on our share in that endeavour.

Human trafficking is a very serious crime, and a gross violation of fundamental rights. It denies its victims their very humanity. Luxembourg combats human trafficking through a multidisciplinary approach, as recommended by international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, in the framework of normative texts, projects and awareness-raising campaigns. At the national level, Luxembourg's policy on human trafficking focuses on three main areas — prevention, the protection and promotion of victims' rights and the prosecution of perpetrators and co-perpetrators. We have undertaken the following actions.

In December 2016, the Government launched a national media campaign to enhance the fight against human trafficking and to inform the public at large of its various forms and of the fact that trafficking exists in Luxembourg. The campaign included spots shown in theatres, radio messages and posters in public spaces.

The Government of Luxembourg also organized an international conference in Luxembourg in December 2016, during Luxembourg's Benelux presidency, which brought together many actors around the topic of human trafficking. The Benelux countries — Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg — signed a joint declaration on strengthening cooperation in this area. This issue will again be on the agenda in 2017. Our main concern is adequate and sufficient training of our law-enforcement authorities.

In 2017, the National Institute of Public Administration organized four different kinds of training for public officials, including police, customs agents and labour inspectors, members of civil society, immigration agents, representatives of municipalities and diplomatic personnel. We are also making special efforts to raise awareness among judges. Members of the judiciary have undergone a special training course for judges and attorneys organized by France's École nationale de la magistrature. As a result, the number of cases taken to court in recent years has increased steadily.

Our inter-ministerial trafficking coordinating committee brings together representatives from law enforcement, Government ministries and non-governmental organizations in charge of victim protection and meets at least bimonthly. The fight, which is an ongoing and continuous process, will remain a national priority for years to come. No one has done enough on this matter. We can all do more and do better. We will continue our efforts to address this challenge globally through European and global institutions and through our funding and implementation of development cooperation in some of the most vulnerable regions. In that context, the role of the United Nations, in particular its Vienna headquarters, is irreplaceable.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mrs. Marsudi (Indonesia): Much has changed since the adoption and review of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Indonesia calls for enhancing global efforts to curb trafficking in persons, which is contrary to global efforts to achieve a decent life and is an obstacle in our quest for a global ecosystem of peace, stability and prosperity.

Some 21 million people are victims of forced labour and trafficking globally, and therefore we cannot stay silent but must redouble our collective efforts. Through partnership and cooperation, countries of origin and transit and destination countries must work together more closely. For its part, Indonesia fully adheres to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Indonesia's national task force to combat trafficking in persons continues to prevent crimes, prosecute perpetrators and protect victims. We apply effective measures, including increasing the capacity of consular officers as first responders, creating an e-protection platform to strengthen and integrate data collection, implementing a follow-the-money method to help the prosecution process and provide compensation to victims, and establishing safe houses for victims.

Indonesia takes a leading role in promoting bilateral, regional and international cooperation, among other things, through promoting the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention

against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. The Bali Process has proved its effectiveness in addressing the illegal movement of persons in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in 2015.

The Government alone cannot solve the problem. Engaging with the private sector is a necessity. Accordingly, the Bali Process successfully conducted a Government business forum in August as an avenue for engagement between Government and business in curbing trafficking. During the meeting, participants agreed on an action-oriented work plan. Indonesia is also looking forward to progress in the negotiation on the United Nations global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration and will contribute to its implementation.

Finally, let me touch upon the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state and its impact on Bangladesh. As the number of refugees increases, we must prepare anticipatory measures to ensure the welfare and safety of the refugees in order to prevent their exploitation by traffickers. We cannot let that crisis lead to another disaster.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Dato Sri Anifah Aman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Aman (Malaysia): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. Malaysia joins the international community in addressing the scourge of human trafficking. Malaysia condemns these heinous crimes and accords the highest priority in combating trafficking in persons. Malaysia is not only a transit and destination country for the victims of trafficking in persons; its citizens have also become targets.

That is why Malaysia has instituted appropriate national laws, particularly regarding the penal code, through its promulgation in 2007 of acts on combating trafficking in persons and smuggling migrants. As a result, the number of convictions has substantially increased. In 2007 we also established an inter-ministerial council for anti-trafficking in persons and anti-smuggling of migrants, chaired by our Deputy Prime Minister. Malaysia's efforts have also been guided by a national action plan on anti-trafficking in persons for the period from 2016 to 2020, which is consistent with the 2010 Global Plan of Action.

Our records show that the majority of human trafficking victims come from neighbouring countries. In that regard, Malaysia places a high premium on the centrality of bilateral and regional cooperation in combating this transnational crime. Indeed, on 7 September 2017, Malaysia ratified the 2015 Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Malaysia is also an active member of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, a mechanism aimed at combating this scourge.

Based on the measures it has put in place, Malaysia is determined to prosecute perpetrators and provide protections to the victims. We believe in a comprehensive approach, with greater emphasis on prevention and with a particular focus on the root causes endemic to source countries.

Given the unspeakable developments in Rakhine state, Malaysia is concerned that the more than 400,000 Rohingya currently seeking refuge in Bangladesh could become victims of human trafficking. The transnational crime syndicates are already exploiting the human misery stemming from this sordid situation. Malaysia therefore strongly urges Myanmar to heed the repeated calls of the international community to end the violence against the Rohingya.

The solution to the complex issue of trafficking in persons requires collective efforts by both State and non-State actors. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the measures outlined in the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) serve as an excellent basis for navigating the way forward. Malaysia pledges its unwavering commitment to decisive action in our common and urgent quest to rid ourselves of the scourge of trafficking in persons. For the sake of humankind, we have no choice but to prevail.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of Eritrea, who, for the past half a century, have been resolutely fighting for human dignity and regional stability. We have been at

the forefront of the struggle to combat and eradicate human trafficking in all its manifestations.

Eritrea welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting to appraise the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Periodic reviews could provide Member States with the opportunity to evaluate the progress made and deliberate on the challenges of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. However, without focused international cooperation to eradicate the causes of human trafficking — extreme poverty, global inequality, the vulnerability of irregular migrants, conflicts and wars of aggression, sexual exploitation, cheap labour and organ harvesting — our next appraisal could be a discussion of gaps and not progress.

The interrelated crimes of human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants are posing grave challenges to the security and development of the Horn of Africa. Many people, especially younger members of the population, continue to fall victim to criminal groups as they attempt to migrate to Europe and the Gulf countries. They face abduction, extortion, gender-related violence, torture and death. The dearth of regional understanding and robust cooperation among countries of origin and countries of destination has, until recently, meant impunity for traffickers and smugglers. Moreover, in the case of Eritrean victims, overwhelming evidence exists regarding the complicity of some Governments and organizations in the region and beyond. These Governments and organizations involved in the smuggling of Eritreans are exploiting them as part of their sensationalist propaganda campaign to demonize our nation and encourage our young people to flee and thereby weaken the country.

The Eritrean Government has for years called for an independent international body to investigate human trafficking in the Horn of Africa with the aim of bringing those responsible to justice. Eritrea's repeated requests for the Secretary-General and the Security Council to initiate such an investigation have gone unheeded. Many of those responsible for the trafficking of Eritreans continue to live in European countries and conduct their criminal activities with money they raise in the guise of supporting victims. The recent declaration by Italian authorities on the collusion between human traffickers and individuals ostensibly dedicated to rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean Sea is a testament to this fact. The Italian authorities are investigating a person whose involvement in the smuggling of Eritrean migrants and his relationship with human traffickers in East and North Africa has been known by the Eritrean Government for years.

More international effort is needed to ensure that no case of human trafficking ever goes unprosecuted. Every individual involved in the heinous crime of human trafficking must be held accountable under the law and face punishment.

I would like to assure the Assembly that the people and the Government of Eritrea will steadfastly continue their fight against human trafficking and smuggling and expose sponsors of these activities. Eritrea will continue to work with the countries of the region bilaterally and as part of the African Union-Horn of Africa Initiative on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as with European countries, in order to eliminate this crime.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Michael Masutha, Minister of Justice and Correctional Services of South Africa.

Mr. Masutha (South Africa): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting, which is an important milestone in assessing the progress of our efforts to fight the crime of trafficking in persons, pursuant to the obligations we undertook to that end under the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Person.

We also wish to congratulate Member States on adopting the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). We feel that this important document strongly reaffirms our collective will to eradicate the crime of trafficking in persons.

Trafficking in persons has rapidly spiralled into a global crisis, affecting each and every country, whether they are countries of origin, transit or destination for victims. South Africa is no exception in this regard, and our law enforcement and criminal justice system are engaged in an ongoing fight against this terrible crime.

I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that we have recorded numerous successes in this fight, having disrupted several significant syndicates and successfully arrested, convicted and imprisoned perpetrators of this crime. We also continue to provide assistance and support to victims, in line with international best practices in this regard.

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa has made significant strides in the development of legislation to protect the rights of vulnerable persons, including the victims of trafficking in persons. Whereas offences linked to the trafficking in persons were previously dealt with by various pieces of legislation, such as the Sexual Offences Act of 2007 and the Children's Act of 2005, they have now been harmonized and brought together under a single, comprehensive statute, the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act. This important legal framework provides a comprehensive and integrated instrument to combat trafficking in persons in all its forms.

The Act ensures that in South Africa, the offence of trafficking in persons is broadly defined to include different forms of the crime, including labour trafficking. It also provides for the imposition of appropriate sentences for these crimes and for various measures to protect and assist victims of trafficking in persons. The Act, which is centred on prevention, protection and prosecution, is also closely aligned with South Africa's international obligations and commitments, particularly with respect to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

In ensuring nationwide implementation of our policies on trafficking in persons, the South African Government has established a national inter-sectoral committee on the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons, consisting of national representatives of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders and others. These coordinating structures, known as trafficking-in-persons provincial task teams, are replicated throughout all of our nine provinces and work closely with relevant international organizations.

We recognize that the achievement of our objectives in eradicating trafficking in persons can be realized only through close cooperation and collaboration with our international partners. The transnational nature of trafficking necessitates cooperation and mutual assistance with other countries and international organizations, whose expertise on such matters is invaluable.

We would like to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF, in particular, in assisting us to implement our strategies to combat this crime. With their cooperation, the South African Government has developed a joint implementation plan within the framework of the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, which is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC that is being implemented in partnership with the IOM and UNICEF.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government of South Africa, I would like to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to continuing the fight against trafficking in persons in all of its manifestations, working hand in hand with the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Issa bin Saad Al-Jafali Al-Nuaimi, Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nuaimi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of my delegation, I am pleased and honoured, Mr. President, to address you and the General Assembly on the occasion of this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We are pleased today to witness the official adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), to which Qatar, in partnership with Belgium, has contributed by facilitating the negotiations on it. The Declaration was agreed upon thanks to the Member States' political will to take concerted and decisive action to implement the Plan of Action and put an end to the heinous crime of trafficking in persons, wherever it is committed.

Combating the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings requires addressing the real causes leading to it, whether social, economic, cultural, political or ideological, or because of the absence of the rule of law or any other reason. The international community's inability to bring decisive and just settlements to conflicts and the resulting terrorism and emergence of armed organizations operating outside the framework of the international law are unquestionably major contributors to the growing phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, which violates the fundamental rights of individuals and entire peoples alike. In fact,

crises and conflicts create a propitious environment for traffickers to commit crimes of human trafficking.

At the national level, the State of Qatar has taken many legislative measures, including the enactment of Law No. 15 of 2011 on combating human trafficking, which criminalizes trafficking in persons in all its forms and types, Law No. 21 of 2015, which abolished the *kafala* or labour sponsorship system, and Law No. 15 of 2017, on domestic workers.

At the institutional level, the Government established the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking to consolidate the efforts of the State institutions and civil society aimed at addressing the problem of trafficking in human beings. To that end, the Committee aims to develop a national plan to combat human trafficking and follow up on its implementation, as well as programmes that provide care and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking and assist in their rapid integration into society. In addition, the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking, together with INTERPOL, is coordinating the convening of the annual conference on combating human trafficking and smuggling of persons, to be held in Doha in December.

At the regional level, the State of Qatar has been sponsoring the Arab Initiative to Build National Capacities to Combat Human Trafficking in the Arab Countries, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the League of Arab States. It aims to build and rehabilitate national capacities in various areas of combating human trafficking in the Arab region, using scientific and professional methods.

At the international level, as part of its firm belief in the importance of preserving human dignity and fulfilling our moral and legal obligations, and as an active member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and the Group of Friends to End Modern Slavery, the State of Qatar has spared no effort to support the efforts of the international community to combat trafficking in human beings and the related issues of forced labour, modern slavery and child labour.

My country has supported the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons since its adoption. The State of Qatar has been a major donor to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, since its inception. In 2005, the State hosted the thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing the crime of trafficking in human beings, as set forth in the Doha Declaration. The State of Qatar is also a major supporter of UNODC, which is the leading international authority on combating human trafficking.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the State of Qatar attaches great importance to the fight against human trafficking at the legislative, institutional, public awareness and international cooperation levels. We will spare no effort in contributing actively in support of regional and international efforts to combat human trafficking.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Priscah Mupfumira, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe.

Ms. Mupfumira (Zimbabwe): Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that has been described as a modern-day form of slavery affecting millions of men, women and children worldwide. It is good to note that issues of human trafficking have become global concerns requiring global solutions. Like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe is a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children who are being subjected to various forms of abuse, including sexual abuse, domestic servitude and forced labour.

In 2007, Zimbabwe ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In 2014, Zimbabwe enacted a trafficking-in-persons law, which criminalized human trafficking in our country. To demonstrate its commitment to countering trafficking in persons, Zimbabwe enacted a statutory instrument establishing an anti-trafficking inter-ministerial committee. In 2016, we launched our first national plan of action, for the period from 2016 to 2018, which is the implementation tool and national response strategy for the trafficking-in-persons act. The plan of action is anchored on four pillars of intervention — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership coordination.

The prevention of trafficking in persons falls within the mandate of the Ministry of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs. These ministries are responsible for raising public awareness and building the capacity of relevant stakeholders. The protection pillar falls under

my ministry, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, which is charged with providing protection services to survivors of human trafficking by offering appropriate shelter for safety, counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration support. The prosecution pillar is the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, which investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking, respectively.

Partnership and coordination are important for pulling efforts and resources together in order to prevent trafficking. The issue of human trafficking has attracted considerable national attention in Zimbabwe, and efforts are being channelled in order to combat it. The country has held two successful commemorations of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

Since April 2016, under the protection pillar, the Government of Zimbabwe has repatriated 138 victims of human trafficking. Special arrangements were made to receive and move victims upon their arrival to places of safety without unnecessary media attention, in order to protect their privacy. At reception centres, medical, psychosocial and other support services are provided to the victims. The Government continues to support the returnees through ongoing social protection programmes, including access to free education, medical assistance, cash transfers and other public-assistance programmes.

Under the partnership pillar, the Government is working with the International Organization for Migration to establish income-generating projects for victims. Zimbabwe is ready and willing to share and learn from others with greater experience than ours in dealing with the challenges associated with human trafficking.

Migration is a reality that we all have to face, which is why global solutions and collective commitments are needed. Hopefully, the Global Compact on Migration will deliver us from the scourge of human trafficking. The international community can count on Zimbabwe's continued support in efforts aimed at combating human trafficking and its associated evils.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexis Bethancourt Yau, Minister for Public Security of Panama.

Mr. Bethancourt Yau (Panama): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional network consisting of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Panama. The Human Security Network is an informal group of States that advocates a people-centred, holistic approach to security, complementing the more traditional understanding of national and international security.

Human trafficking violates and impairs the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and constitutes a crime that exploits persons, enslaving them in forced labour, domestic servitude or sexual exploitation, among other things. In our interconnected world, this serious challenge to humankind is ongoing, and we must address its impact on all persons, especially women and children.

The Network recognizes the importance that States Members of the United Nations attach to developing policies, programmes and strategies to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, including its incorporation of fighting this threat into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the concerted implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We therefore welcome the convening of today's high-level meeting, as well as the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which will serve as a foundation for our common action to end this crime wherever it may occur. In this regard, the Network underlines the importance of the universal ratification and implementation of international legally binding instruments to address this crime, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

We also want to highlight the value-added contribution of the Human Security approach in combating trafficking in persons. The holistic and contextual nature of the Human Security approach is well placed to address the disproportionate impact of trafficking in persons on vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. This approach, which places humans at the centre of all considerations, is also conducive to promoting partnership, coordination and coherence in the efforts we undertake. Accordingly, we welcome the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which has the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as its coordinator.

Given the meagre global resources available to fight trafficking in persons, we also support and urge other Member States to contribute to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, established under the Global Plan of Action and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which could provide support for projects that combat trafficking in persons. We remain deeply concerned by the threat posed by this serious crime, which is affecting international security and constitutes a global challenge.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would now like to address the topic of my country's national capacities in this area.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Panama, over which His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez presides, it is my pleasure to take this opportunity to share a few words in my capacity as Minister of Security, Chair of the National Commission against Trafficking in Persons in Panama, member of the regional coalition against trafficking in persons and member of the Board of Trustees of the voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons.

For President Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez's Administration, preventing and combating trafficking in persons is a priority within our citizen-security strategy, which is aimed at ensuring human rights and protecting Panama's platform of world-class services and connectivity from organized crime, with a view to ensuring that it is not used for illegal activities. Based on our awareness of the great responsibility we had undertaken as the State of Panama and our compliance, since the first month of its implementation, with the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in 2010, we have made some important achievements, including dismantling 15 networks used in trafficking in persons, prosecuting traffickers by opening more than 10 cases and completing three of them, yielding three guilty verdicts, and rescuing more than 150 victims from the scourge between 2015 and 2017. Those operational results are the fruit of an array of concrete actions aimed at preventing trafficking, prosecuting traffickers, protecting victims and the establishing alliances to mobilize cooperative resources.

At the institutional, technical and legal levels, we have established a national anti-trafficking commission made up of 16 public-sector entities and representatives of the private sector and international organizations. In addition, we are enforcing our Law No. 79 of 2011 against trafficking in persons and other related activities.

In October, we will hold a meeting of our National Commission in order to adopt the matrix of intervention modalities set forth in the national plan against trafficking in persons for the five-year period from 2017 to 2022, which includes five strategic approaches and courses of action, as well as goals, management guidelines and the creation of an entity responsible for their implementation. The Commission has been a major driving force in a nationwide awareness-raising campaign mirroring the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, including such activities as the recent large-scale anti-trafficking campaign that brought together more than 2,000 people in one of the main streets of the country so that the scourge could be known to all for the crime that it is.

During the past several months, in order to strengthen national prevention efforts, we have organized official academic activities and events at the national level as well as radio and television spots designed to raise public awareness and to promote participation and awareness of civil servants and civil society with a view to preventing and combating trafficking. We have carried out these activities with the support of two international organizations that I would like to take this opportunity to thank, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We hope to continue working together with those entities and with all other relevant organizations that wish to join in this effort.

Through its activities as Chair of the regional coalition against trafficking in persons and as Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, Panama remains very active, together with the Chair of the Board, Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and its other members, in combating human trafficking at the regional and international levels. I take this opportunity to call on all representatives to share with their respective Governments the need to contribute to the trust fund, the goals of which include carrying out activities in tandem with UNODC aimed at supporting the victims of trafficking.

Accordingly, as Vice-Chair of the trust fund, Panama wants to set an example, so I am proud to say that we have already approved a transfer of funds. Further, working closely with UNODC, we are currently in the process of building a shelter for trafficking victims that will be the first of its kind in the region.

On behalf of the Ministry of Security and the Government of Panama, we urgently call on Member States to participate actively in the panel discussions we have planned so that together we can find the best tools to help us combat and eradicate trafficking in persons and fight transnational crime.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, may I once again appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements so that all those inscribed on the list will be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Emmanuel Ngoie Kasongo Ilunga, Minister in Charge of Congolese Nationals Abroad of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ilunga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At a time when Africa and the rest of the world are facing an acute migrant crisis that denies humankind the right to peace, I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for the very timely initiative of including this agenda item on the sidelines of the opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

It is a topic of great interest to my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My participation in the work here reaffirms the firm commitment of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, to contributing to international peace and security, without which the world is at risk of unravelling at the societal level. As everyone knows, slavery and trafficking in persons are cross-cutting social issues that lead to transborder violations that systematically infringe on international human rights agreements and put us in situations that often force States and international organizations to expend tremendous efforts to eradicate them.

Like the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is becoming a destination and transit country for men, women and children who are victims of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. According to the report presented by the National Assembly at its ordinary session in 2013, more than 400 young Congolese girls had been sold as sex slaves. This is relevant to the mission in the Middle East in August that I personally carried out with the support of the International Organization for Migration upon instructions from my Head of State, which was aimed at repatriating seven Congolese girls who had been subjected to forced domestic labour and other inhumane practices, as well as being abused as sex slaves.

In that regard, the Democratic Republic of the Congo joined the fight to eradicate trafficking in all its forms by using the legal system to punish all acts involving the forced labour of children and women as well as all forms of sexual abuse. The Government was called on to consider these scourges thoroughly by organizing a conference, to be held in Kinshasa on 12 and 13 October, on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, with the goal of establishing a permanent mechanism to combat these two scourges.

Sexual violence is yet another scourge. In that regard, a collection of military justice decisions dating from 2010 to 2015 has been compiled in the *Journal of Decisions of the Military High Court*, which has shown that cases of sexual violence in our country decreased by 85 per cent in this period, during which a framework for providing victims with reparations was created. Preventive measures and ways of providing assistance to victims have also been recommended. It is clear that the work of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to restore peace and tranquillity in the eastern part of our country is in line with efforts being made by international organizations to end the cycle of wars and the presence of armed groups in that part of our national territory, resulting from the exploitation of resources that has fuelled the misdeeds condemned by the international community.

In conclusion, my Government requests expertise and support from all parties committed to combating the scourge of human trafficking, with a view to helping us implement the recommendations adopted at today's meeting, as well as the provisions of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Naela Gabr Mohamed Gabr, State Minister, President of the National Coordination Committee on Migration and Combating Human

Trafficking of Egypt, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking.

Ms. Gabr (Egypt): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, which comprises Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Ecuador, Eritrea, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and my own country, Egypt.

We welcome the convening of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the review of the achievements made in implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Group also commends today's adoption of the political declaration on the topic (resolution 72/1). In this regard, we would like to express our appreciation to the facilitators, His Excellency the Ambassador of Belgium and Her Excellency the Ambassador of Qatar, who demonstrated great political acumen in their conduct of the complex discussions in the negotiations. We thank them for their efforts and leadership throughout the drafting process. We also thank all Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on the text of the political declaration. It is worthwhile mentioning in this context that the Declaration appears to be the first comprehensive political document on human trafficking to be adopted by the United Nations since the Global Plan of Action.

The Group would like to reiterate its support for the political declaration, which it considers a crucial element in our collective response to the multidimensional issue of trafficking in persons. We also welcome the fact that the Declaration is a meaningful supplement to the Global Plan of Action in that it outlines ways of further bringing together international efforts aimed at curbing human trafficking.

There is, however, no room for complacency. Poverty and inequality within and among countries are the root causes that make people vulnerable to trafficking. Combating poverty and reducing inequality are the essence of development efforts. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — which gave rise, among other things, to the three Sustainable Development Goals on human trafficking, 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 — is a clear reminder of the need to scale up our efforts to tackle these root causes in order to put an end to this heinous crime.

Needless to say, the international community must come up with a better, more just, more equitable and more comprehensive response if it is to defeat this scourge. We must ensure that the issue of human trafficking continues to be the subject of the international community's acute focus and engagement. For its part, the Group of Friends is committed to working with each other and with partners around the world. We recognize the important role played by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in this process, and support an expansion of its activities related, among other things, to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. We invite all stakeholders to take an active part in the forthcoming appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and make contributions to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

The Group of Friends believes that the political declaration and today's high-level meeting of the General Assembly will be an important step forward in addressing the global challenge of trafficking in persons.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I shall now speak in my national capacity as the representative of Egypt.

In 2007, Egypt was among the first countries to adopt a national mechanism to coordinate actions among various entities established to combat the crime of human trafficking. This step was followed by field research on the most common forms of trafficking in Egypt. Later, in 2010, we enacted Law No. 64, on prosecuting traffickers and protecting victims. Since then, we have adopted a national strategy based on four pillars — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — and we remain eager to implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action. To that end, we have set up a national action plan based on the following lines of action.

The first is the effective enforcement of Law No. 64 of 2010 through the training of officials in the justice system, whether arresting officers, investigators or members of the judiciary, by organizing intensive courses for them.

The second is raising the awareness of relevant stakeholders, especially non-governmental organizations, social workers, teachers, among others, in prevention and protection processes.

The third is sponsoring a national media campaign addressed to the most vulnerable sectors, focusing on the areas in the different governorates, especially villages, where human trafficking is active.

The fourth is promoting a victim-protection mechanism, establishing foster homes for women and children and taking regulated measures to establish a fund for the protection of victims and witnesses.

The fifth is accelerating the implementation of development programmes and plans in slums and other low-income areas.

The sixth is stressing the interconnections between combating human trafficking and fighting illegal migration. The relationship between combating human trafficking and illegal migration is worth highlighting because illegal migrants are prone to abuse.

The seventh is activating regional cooperation as a foundation for information exchange and discovering the practices that work best in the Arab or African context.

The eighth is respecting the human rights dimension, which must be stressed at all stages and in all activities undertaken to counter human trafficking. The rights of victims and witnesses are respected through activities coordinated with the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Egyptian National Council for Women and the Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

The ninth involves facilitating international cooperation with United Nations organs and agencies to make the best use of the technical and practical lessons learned.

The tenth is cooperating with non-governmental organizations, especially those working to raise awareness of the danger of human trafficking in our governorates while underlining the importance of reporting criminals and highlighting the mechanisms designed to protect witnesses.

I will briefly touch on some of the achievements made from 2013 to the present. In October 2016, we launched a national strategy to prevent and combat human trafficking, which included a five-year plan of action drafted with the assistance of many national institutions and non-governmental organizations. These entities also have also helped in the implementation process through activities that raise awareness and provide assistance, for example, to households headed by women. We have established three specialized criminal chambers within appeals courts in three Egyptian governorates in order to ensure rapid judicial process in the handling of cases. We have also established a unit to counter human trafficking and have worked with various entities, non-governmental organizations and the media.

Mr. Danon (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Also in 2016, we enacted Law No. 82 on combating illegal migration and trafficking, which addresses a number of very important points: it is the first law of its kind in the Middle East to define the term "smuggling of migrants". It also promotes deterrence by strictly punishing perpetrators and combines into a single committee two national committees, one on countering human trafficking and the other on illegal migration. I am honoured to preside over this combined committee, which is part of the Cabinet. We have also adopted a national strategy and a related media campaign designed to deter the merchants of death and provide protection to those at risk of being abused.

Egypt has joined the Aware Migrants campaign organized by the Italian Ministry of Interior together with the International Organization for Migration. This campaign is being conducted in three languages — English, French and Arabic — in line with our efforts to protect migrants, especially those coming from Southern Africa. In cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, we have also organized a number of training courses on human trafficking for African diplomats, peacekeepers and border-protection personnel.

In all regional and international forums, Egypt has declared its readiness to cooperate with all regional and international bodies in combating this crime by any and all means, in order to protect society while respecting the rights of the individual.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Greenidge (Guyana): The convening of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to

Combat Trafficking in Persons comes at an important juncture in our work. It takes place at a time when human trafficking is the world's most profitable criminal enterprise, a status it shares with arms trafficking. The Government of Guyana expresses its solidarity with victims and survivors of such crimes while committing to ensuring that all measures are taken nationally in the global fight against the trafficking in persons.

I wish to highlight Guyana's recent elevation from a Tier 2 to a Tier 1 country, as reflected in the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report 2017*. We believe that this achievement is justified recognition of the tireless efforts of the Government of Guyana and its partners aimed at eliminating trafficking in persons in our country. While this elevation to a Tier 1 country is a welcome achievement for Guyana, we remain cognizant of the many challenges that remain in addressing human trafficking, especially with regard to training and awareness, more efficient prosecutions and support for and referral of victims.

An extremely important aspect of any Government's fight against human trafficking is its effort to prevent the crime from occurring in the first place. In Guyana we have embarked on a number of different initiatives through the pillars of prevention, protection and prosecution in an effort to dissuade prospective offenders from committing this crime. The Government of Guyana has established a ministerial task force on trafficking in persons that promotes the implementation of a number of measures and initiatives to combat human trafficking.

The ministerial task force has so far conducted awareness-training for police prosecutors, immigration officials and media practitioners, especially those who report on crimes involving children. In addition, the task force's action sub-committee has also been active in 2017, as teams led by the Guyana Police Force and the Ministry of Social Protection conducted a number of enforcement sweeps in areas where the crime of trafficking in persons was suspected to be taking place. In 2017, the task force also noted an increase in reports from Guyana's citizens, which suggests that the awareness campaign is showing some measure of success. The people's increased awareness of their civic roles and responsibilities has been pivotal to the success achieved by the Government of Guyana in its efforts to eliminate this scourge.

Guyana's difficult terrain presents an acute challenge for those who monitor and enforce our porous borders. With limited capacity to effectively police the country's more remote regions, the Guyana Police Force regularly engages in enforcement sweeps that include surveillance, surprise inspections and establishment raids, and in raising awareness using various communication media in these remote communities, through schools and youth groups, both general and faith-based.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important collaboration we have with our many non-governmental organizations and civil-society partners in the areas of victim care and assistance, including ensuring that identified victims are not penalized or revictimized for having been trafficked.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the Government of Guyana's commitment to collaborating with stakeholders, both local and foreign, to combat the crime of human trafficking in Guyana through the pillars of prevention, protection and prosecution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Erastus Uutoni, Vice-Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Uutoni (Namibia): In September 2016, at the high-level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants, we agreed on and made a declaration that contained provisions for the drafting of global compacts on safe, orderly and regular migration and on refugees.

This high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons provides us with an opportunity to continue our exchange of views on the Plan of Action on how we should work together to fight the scourge of human trafficking, which has become a worldwide problem tantamount to modern-day slavery.

One of the reasons that trafficking in persons has continued to grow is the difficulty of combating it, due in large part to the fact that it is a concealed crime in which victims are promised better lives in their destination countries. As a result, even cases where law enforcement officials suspect the presence of trafficking are rarely prosecuted because the victims often side with the perpetrators.

The unfortunate imbalance in the world's economies means that some countries are targeted as destinations for trafficked persons and others as sources for victims. It goes without saying that as long as there is a rich global North and a poor global South, traffickers will continue to take advantage of the need for labour in rich countries where the provisions of labour migration laws favour highly skilled labour over semi-skilled personnel. This makes it difficult for people in the latter category to migrate, making it possible for some of them to be lured into modern-day slavery. Furthermore, the strengthening of border controls by many nations, aided by the closure of some formal channels of migration, provides the perfect motive for greater use of irregular migration channels in which traffickers exploit vulnerable migrants.

The continued political unrest worldwide continues to drive millions of people from their homes to unknown worlds across international boundaries. Some undertake dangerous journeys, crossing deserts or braving the Mediterranean Sea in inadequate boats.

We in Namibia are also challenged by the scourge of trafficking in persons, with some suspects being acquitted due to lack of evidence. So far, we have secured one conviction, in 2016, while other cases remain under investigation. Although trafficking in persons is currently criminalized under our Prevention of Organized Crime Act, efforts are under way to enact a law that deals specifically with trafficking in persons. In addition, manuals on the identification and treatment of suspected victims and victims of trafficking have been provided to immigration officers and other law enforcement officers. Joint training of border officials continues, and both police and immigration training curriculums are now geared to tackling that problem.

It is our belief that now is the time for the world to agree on workable strategies. The time has come for us to strengthen border controls in order to punish the offenders and protect the victims. The time has come for us to make lawful migration easy and prevent the creation of a market for traffickers. The time has come for world leaders to realize that if States create a better environment, they will reduce people's need to seek livelihoods elsewhere, and hence reduce the number of trafficking victims.

In conclusion, the time has come for us to build the capacity of officials dealing with migration, provide shelter for the victims of trafficking, enhance cooperation between North and South, build bridges to facilitate migration instead of barriers and respect the human rights of migrants.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to know how the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and today's meeting help to combat trafficking in persons. That is a particularly timely question. Imagine for a moment that the people who are the victims of this modern slave trade are asking themselves that question and happen to have found out about today's meeting here in New York. Would those people, trapped in the bonds of slavery, be inspired by the fact that the States Members of the United Nations have agreed on the text for a political declaration? Would it spark hope in their souls to know how much thought has gone into our recent work? Would they rejoice in the fact that the participants in our high-level meeting have once again unanimously labelled trafficking in persons as a phenomenon that shames humankind?

Those are rhetorical questions, because we all know the answers to them very well. The Global Plan of Action is not a convention, it is only an invitation to act. It is a declaration of intent. The real value and significance of those intentions are attained only when they take the form of practical action. Which practical actions will generate the hope that humankind can find the determination and will to put an end to human trafficking?

The first is unity of action. Only by really uniting the efforts of all countries and organizations and placing them above any considerations of political gain, convenience or expedience can we achieve a new dynamic in the struggle against modern slavery. Any attempt to use the issue of the fight against human trafficking for self-promotion, selecting preferential partners or finding aspects of the issue to criticize will create, if not the actuality, at least the impression of a lack of focus and chaos in our efforts. Until every State, every secretariat of an international organization and every non-governmental partner works singlemindedly to achieve the mindset of a group of friends and of open and honest partners against a mindset of competition, human traffickers will sleep soundly.

Secondly, we need to take small, practical steps so that we all contribute what we can to the common effort. It is long past time for us to recognize that participation in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its complementary Palermo Protocol is a matter of moral choice as well as a political and legal issue. If traffickers can see that the participation of States in such key documents is not universal, they will have strong evidence that we are still divided as a global community.

In addition, much greater support is required for the work of the voluntary trust fund for the protection of victims of human trafficking. As a representative of Belarus, I am proud to say that my country has made its third voluntary contribution to the fund. I would like to appeal to the high-level representatives of Member States to consider the possibility of supporting the fund as an acute and urgent necessity. Allocating the means to support the fund represents direct action providing practical support for victims of human trafficking.

Thirdly, our most important work is the action we take at the national level. The main drivers of those efforts are our active major State stakeholders, elites that are clearly aware of their moral responsibility for more resolute and uncompromising action to combat human trafficking. They are elites open to partnership-based cooperation to achieve those goals with like-minded people in their own countries and at the international level.

Let us each ask ourselves if are we among those like-minded thinkers. Protecting people from slavery, violence and exploitation is possible. The time for discussions and navel-gazing has passed. Now is the time to act.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marjorie Espinosa, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Ms. Espinosa (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the convening of this high-level meeting on the evaluation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is an appeal by the international community for a concerted response in fighting and eliminating all forms of that transnational crime.

The Global Plan of Action demonstrates the willingness of States to shoulder their commitments, with concrete decisions on preventing human trafficking, protecting and assisting victims and prosecuting human traffickers, all underpinned by the international legal framework and adherence to the domestic regulations of States.

Following the Dominican Republic's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, as well as the adoption of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Dominican Government has taken substantial steps at the domestic level to strengthen its institutional structures, improve the capacities of its principal actors and adapt its specific laws. A national action mechanism was created by the executive branch through decree 575-07, the inter-institutional commission to combat trafficking in persons and illegal trafficking of migrants. The commission is composed of 14 State institutions and is led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Under the legal protection of the commission, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs carried out a series of meetings for formulating and implementing our national plan of action against trafficking in persons and illicit trafficking of migrants for the period from 2009 to 2014. During those meetings, we incorporated effective public policies to ensure a comprehensive and holistic approach in the fight against trafficking in persons. In concert with that national strategy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is currently designing a second national plan of action for the period from 2017 to 2020, through an inter-institutional and intersectoral consensus, in order to reaffirm and strengthen our national policy against such crimes against humanity.

The objective of our national plan to combat trafficking in persons remains the promotion of policies that are integrated and coordinated among the various institutions of the State, civil society and international organizations related to the subject, within the framework of its three axes — prevention, assistance to victims and witnesses and the restitution of their rights, and investigation and prosecution.

With regard to prevention, a number of actions have been taken, including publicity campaigns aimed at raising awareness about trafficking in persons and the modalities, days of reflection, informative panels and publications on the subject and, in particular, targeted campaigns on the prevention of the sexual and commercial exploitation of children and adolescents, with the technical and financial support of United

Nations agencies such as UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration.

Where victim assistance is concerned, the Dominican Government has taken specific actions for protecting and caring for victims of trafficking in persons, restoring their rights and preventing their revictimization. In 2016, the first specialized home to help adult victims of trafficking was established, and a victim assistance unit was created under the Attorney General's Office. More recently, we signed an inter-institutional agreement on the creation of a pilot programme for the protection and reintegration of Dominican deportees and returnees, including victims of trafficking, as a vulnerable migrant population. That was made possible by the support of the Organization of American States and the International Organization for Migration.

Regarding investigation and prosecution, among the most significant initiatives and advances has been our establishment in 2013 of an office of a specialized prosecutor for the illegal trafficking of migrants and trafficking in persons, thereby creating a designated space and specialized personnel dedicated to working specifically on trafficking in persons, in close coordination with other governmental investigation authorities. Since its inception, the special prosecutor's office has investigated, prosecuted and convicted sex and labour traffickers and migrant traffickers, and significant progress has been made in the judicial system.

All those public polices harmonize, in a cross-cutting manner, with our National Development Strategy 2030, which includes objectives and lines of action for managing migratory flows, strengthening mechanisms for preventing and punishing trafficking in persons and establishing comprehensive systems to care for victims, all in connection to Sustainable Development Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Dominican Republic believes firmly that an effective approach to combating trafficking in persons must have lines of action directed at a cooperative approach among countries of origin, transit, destination and return, prioritizing a necessary and timely intervention in favour of the identified victims, creating and strengthening bilateral work commissions and encouraging regional and multilateral cooperation for the design of technological platforms for information exchange. Those platforms would generate indicators aimed at increasing the effectiveness of national actors and focusing due attention on the migration phenomenon.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of all of the international instruments against trafficking in human beings, and we also commit to further strengthening our internal structures to assist victims and foster an institutional culture with human, financial and technical resources that enable a more comprehensive approach to the phenomenon.

Lastly, we recognize and greatly value the importance of having a forum at the multilateral level, such as that of the United Nations, which promotes synergies among States, the exchange of good practices and information on progress, as well as the identification of new challenges in attaining goals that are of global interest.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Natalia Fedorovych, Vice-Minister for Social Policy of Ukraine.

Ms. Fedorovych (Ukraine): We commend the convening of this high-level meeting to assess the achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Trafficking remains a real threat to peace, human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law, as well as to socioeconomic development. Ukraine reiterates its support for and full adherence to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

In recent years, we have observed a significant evolution in the forms that trafficking in persons takes, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations. In various parts of the world, conflicts encompass a wide range of forms of exploitation, including sexual violence, forced labour, slavery and the unlawful recruitment of children by force into armed service in conflict situations.

Another aspect of the issue is that people displaced by conflict, including refugees, can be especially vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation. In that regard, Ukraine fully supports the commitments in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants on combating human trafficking, including through targeted measures to identify, protect and assist victims, as well as on preventing human trafficking among those affected by displacement, taking into account the particular vulnerabilities of women and children. We

also lend our support to the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which must be an efficient tool for the coordination of joint efforts.

I would like to mention another issue, of great importance for all of us, which is that of accountability and prosecution for perpetrators of trafficking in persons and of crimes of sexual violence in conflicts. Widespread impunity for such crimes is unacceptable, because their repetition creates a vicious circle of delinquency. Along with the provision of psychological, social and medical support to victims, we see the fight against impunity as a key priority area.

Ukraine supports international efforts to combat all forms of human rights abuses and violations in conflict and post-conflict situations. We remain strongly committed to eradicating trafficking. Unfortunately, my country has not been immune to this problem. The fight against this horrendous phenomenon is at the top of the Ukrainian Government's agenda for its activities in the area of human rights. Over the past decade, Ukraine has taken a number of important steps towards establishing a viable nationwide counter-trafficking response and setting up a Government-owned national referral mechanism to identify, assist and protect victims of trafficking.

Ukraine's ratification of key international instruments in the area of combating human trafficking — including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings — and its adoption in 2011 of a national law on combating human trafficking and of a national counter-trafficking action plan for the period from 2016 to 2020 are just a few concrete examples of the steps undertaken in our fight against this dreadful problem.

With regard to protecting children from exploitation and abuse, Ukraine is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol and to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

Let me note, however, that not all of the documents I mentioned can currently be properly implemented in areas of Ukraine that are not under Government control. Three years of Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to increased risks of human trafficking in my country. We have seen numerous cases of human trafficking and forced labour, even slavery, in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which are outside the Government's control. But those cases remain largely unaddressed, due to a lack of safe access for, and proper attention by, the monitoring missions.

The situation is complicated by the 400-kilometre section of the State border with the Russian Federation that is not under Ukraine's control and is widely used to move weapons, ammunition and fighters into the zone of conflict. The victims and perpetrators of trafficking in persons are also moving across that uncontrolled section of the border. In that regard, it should be understood that Russia does not have comprehensive mechanisms for the effective investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators in accordance with the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Among all the Council of Europe member States, today only Russia has not joined that Convention.

Trafficking is a blatant violation of human rights and an offence against the dignity and integrity of a person. Success in our common fight against this scourge requires the efforts of all concerned. A long-term solution can emerge only from consistent political commitments and joint action by the international community to eradicate human trafficking, promote justice and accountability and protect victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abd El-Ghani Awad El-Karim, Under-Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan.

Mr. El-Karim (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, I would like to warmly thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting, and to reaffirm that we are ready to cooperate with him with regard to our commitments based on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in order to end this abominable crime.

Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which reaffirms the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, of September 2016. In September 2015, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which also reinforces these efforts through those of its Goals and targets that combat trafficking in persons.

Sudan supports all international efforts to prevent and reduce human trafficking. We affirm that transnational organized crime in all its forms is a threat, and that fighting those crimes requires strengthening international, regional and bilateral cooperation in the relevant areas, including exchanging information and monitoring suspect financial flows. We also need to take into account the economic and social aspects of the underlying causes of this phenomenon, for poverty is the most dangerous source driving this crime. We call for a holistic approach that includes partnerships and measures to prevent trafficking and ensure that traffickers are prosecuted and victims are protected.

Large flows of migrants and refugees from neighbouring countries have led to major challenges for my country. The flow of migrants is exacerbated by illegal migration and by refugees fleeing camps in order to reach towns and cities. All of those demographic movements are characterized by trafficking in persons, particularly women and children.

The Sudan is a transit country. It is big and covered with desert. My country has been making tireless efforts to fight organized crime consistent with our international and regional commitments. In that regard, I would like to share with the General Assembly certain successes that we have achieved in the area.

First, in October 2014, we adopted a law on combating human trafficking and set up a national committee to fight it. After the law came into force, our police were able to free more than 861 victims, most of them women and children being sent to Libya and on to Europe. They were also able to liberate 560 victims from our northern province, where they were on the way to Sinai.

Secondly, we have amended our asylum regulation acts of 1974 and 2014 so that they are now consistent with changes at the regional and international levels.

Thirdly, we have made amendments to our customs regulations to bring them into line with recent developments.

Fourthly, in October 2014, Khartoum hosted a Conference on Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Horn of Africa, held in cooperation with the African Union and the European Union, with the participation of the neighbouring States of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt and South Sudan. The Conference resulted in what became known as the Khartoum process, with another conference held on the same issue in Rome in November 2014. We call on the international community to meet its commitments under the Khartoum process.

Fifthly, my country's Government has signed a number of agreements with neighbouring countries in order to monitor our borders. We have an agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to combat the problem of porous borders, particularly in eastern Sudan, where the majority of victims are refugees and asylum seekers.

Once again, my country is determined to continue its cooperation with the international community and the United Nations and its specialized agencies to combat human trafficking. We call for this issue to be dealt with in an integrated fashion by taking the necessary measures to halt it. We must also reinforce our efforts to raise awareness on human trafficking and the suffering of victims and to strengthen protection for them and for their rights.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Jean Kalilani, Minister for Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare of Malawi.

Ms. Kalilani (Malawi): I am delighted to be here and to be able to apprise the General Assembly of the progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by resolution 64/293, in order to address the related achievements, gaps and challenges and the implementation of the relevant legal instruments. This is a very important meeting, as trafficking in persons is a global issue that requires our concerted efforts to end this degrading modern-day slavery — the worst form of slavery, in fact. Its barbarism and evil nature have no place in the modern world.

The Global Plan of Action calls for Governments, United Nations bodies, international organizations and civil society to work together to further integrate the fight against human trafficking into the Organization's broader programmes for global development and to strengthen security around the world.

Malawi joins the rest of the States Members of the United Nations in the commitment to combating trafficking in persons. That commitment is underscored by the fact that the Global Plan of Action is complemented by the Sustainable Development Goals, which include three targets that directly relate to trafficking and to the

implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Malawi acknowledges the implementation of the Global Plan at the international, regional and national levels.

On 17 March 2005, the Government of Malawi ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols — the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. Furthermore, the Government of Malawi enacted a trafficking in persons act, No.3 of 2015, which provides a comprehensive legislative framework for combating and preventing trafficking in persons through a human rights-focused and victim-centred approach.

Malawi has also established an institutional framework for effective and coordinated regulations on trafficking in persons and related matters, including provisions for protecting victims of trafficking, preventing trafficking in persons, establishing funding arrangements and caring for and supporting victims, as well as for penalties for specific offences.

Malawi has continued to translate that political will into concrete, specific, time-bound measures, with its adoption of a 2017-2020 national plan of action against trafficking in persons, officially launched on 29 August. The plan acknowledges a holistic approach to interventions by all stakeholders in order to achieve its vision of creating a Malawi free of trafficking in persons and is aligned with the United Nations Global Plan of Action. We are very grateful to the Organization, especially the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as to the Southern African Development Community and the Royal Norwegian Government, for their technical and financial support for achieving those milestones.

However, more support will be needed for our implementation of our national plan. A high-level national coordination committee was established in 2016 to coordinate and manage all issues relating to trafficking in persons. We are currently in the process of establishing an anti-trafficking fund with the sole purpose of supporting victims of trafficking; providing capacity-building for enforcement, social welfare and judicial officers and for investigators and prosecutors; and reintegrating victims back into their communities.

Malawi is also implementing its national registration programme, which includes birth registration. This is very important for citizens and will deter traffickers from taking our children, who are the victims most affected.

Today we need to ensure that the United Nations Global Plan of Action addresses issues of transparency and resource mobilization in order to support the Member States in anti-trafficking programmes, effective partnerships and dealing with corruption.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Vassiliadou (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons remains essential as a framework for joint action to combat trafficking. Today we renew and reinvigorate our common commitment to eradicating trafficking in human beings and to protecting the human rights of the victims.

The process leading up to this meeting, including the multi-stakeholder meeting in July, has provided us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It has further allowed us to address the persistent and emerging challenges that we face in our efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

The Global Plan of Action is structured around prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships. This approach, which is also reflected in the European Union anti-trafficking strategy, has proved its applicability in practice, and we look forward to seeing it applied to addressing trafficking in human beings under the United Nations global compact on migration and the United Nations global compact for refugees.

The EU has set forth, through law and policy, a comprehensive framework for addressing trafficking in human beings in a victim-focused, human-rights-based, gender-specific and child-sensitive way. The EU and its member States have demonstrated their commitment to implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action and to upholding the legal standards enshrined in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, as well as other

international legal instruments addressing trafficking in human beings.

We are working globally with partners to build capacities and promote those standards. The EU remains the world's largest donor of aid, and it finances many projects promoting anti-trafficking action around the world. One example is the joint European Union-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, launched in January 2016. It delivers assistance to 13 countries around the world, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF.

No country in the world is immune to trafficking in human beings. We need to promote cooperation, in particular among countries of origin, transit and destination, including in the development of transnational referral mechanisms — which link national referral mechanisms so as to better identify, refer, protect and assist victims — as well as of data collection systems and the exchange of information for the development of evidence-based policies. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, the private sector and all other relevant partners is also essential.

We are faced with a number of emerging and persistent challenges in the fight against trafficking, which will require increased efforts in the future. They include trafficking in the context of migration and the refugee crisis, the nexus between conflict and trafficking in human beings, the risk of trafficking in supply chains, and trafficking for the purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation, including of children online.

We have come a long way, but what is now vital for the lives of victims and survivors is the effective implementation of legal standards at national and international levels. We must address trafficking in human beings both as a heinous crime and as an abuse and a violation of human rights. There is a need to address root causes that render people vulnerable, and we will work to achieve our commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to address such root causes and vulnerabilities.

We must continue to promote the efforts of all the relevant actors to identify victims of trafficking as early as possible so as to ensure the realization of their right to appropriate assistance, protection and support, taking into account the particular vulnerabilities of women and children, especially unaccompanied children and those separated from their families.

We must ensure accountability for perpetrators. It is the traffickers that should be punished by the law, not the victims.

Most important, we must work on prevention and partnerships, since anything else comes too late for the victims. Prevention is central to the Global Plan of Action and to EU law and policies. We must step up our efforts to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation, in both the legal and illegal economies.

We also call for more cooperation at the United Nations level and stress the role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which has an essential part to play in ensuring that efforts across the United Nations are coherent and avoid duplication.

Finally, we reaffirm our full commitment to continuing and reinforcing our work in this direction, further enhancing international cooperation and working towards an effective global response.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Djundev (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): It is my great honour to take part in today's high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, but I would like to share with the General Assembly a few remarks in my national capacity.

Let me first welcome this timely high-level discussion on an important framework document. It is crucial to keep focus on this heinous crime in all of its aspects and forms, so that it is kept on the agenda along with a variety of other pressing issues we are confronted with. Trafficking in human beings is of particular relevance in the context of the ongoing discussions on the two compacts, on migrants and refugees.

In recent years we have witnessed the determination and action of the United Nations and its Member States, individually and collectively, to suppress this extremely negative phenomenon, which constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and

development. Although some progress has been achieved, there is no room for complacency. Challenges remain that are gaining new forms and requiring an innovative approach.

The Republic of Macedonia has always supported initiatives to raise awareness within the United Nations and other, regional, organizations aimed at more efficient, effective and coordinated action in the area of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. Although the primary responsibility for the protection of human rights and the prevention of and fight against trafficking in persons lies in the hands of the Government, coordination, partnership and cooperation with other national stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, are prerequisites for effective implementation of protection measures and policies.

On the national level, my country has taken a number of important legislative and organizational steps to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. Special attention is paid to prevention and to protection measures that address the vulnerability of women and children as the most likely victims of trafficking. Being on the Balkan route, another important challenge for my country has been human trafficking in the context of illegal migration.

Unfortunately, despite all the efforts undertaken at the national, regional and international levels, human trafficking is still widespread. A more resolute and comprehensive approach on the ground is therefore required. In addition to prevention, we must protect and assist victims, as well as prosecuting criminal groups engaged in trafficking in persons, all of which are prerequisites for yielding results in the fight against this contemporary form of slavery.

Let me conclude by underlining that progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action depends on our resolve and the sustainability of our efforts, as well as on our commitment to translate the obligations we have undertaken into concrete actions on the ground.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Israel.

Ms. Furman (Israel): One might think that slavery and prostitution are problems of the past, relics from another era. But unfortunately, even today, in the twenty-first century, we still see innocent people fall victim to human trafficking. Human trafficking does not exist in a vacuum. It is closely linked to organized crime and terrorist groups that prey on their victims in times of crisis. Nearly 80 per cent of all detected trafficking victims are women and children. More than half of trafficking worldwide is for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Forced labour, which accounts for nearly 40 per cent of all human trafficking, is the slavery of our time.

The Bible tells us that thousands of years ago the Israelite people were slaves in Egypt. After hundreds of years of servitude, we were emancipated and gained our freedom. But with that freedom came the eternal obligation to remember the slavery we experienced. For Israel, internalizing the slavery of our past informs and shapes our efforts to end human trafficking and all forms of modern slavery.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Israel was faced with a severe spate of human trafficking in which women were brought to Israel and forced into prostitution. At the height of that phenomenon, approximately 3,000 women a year were being brought to Israel. Since then, Israel has developed two national plans and aligned a range of ministries, including in the areas of health, social services, internal affairs and justice, to help combat human trafficking. Israel has also enacted far-reaching legislation to prevent human trafficking, covering all forms of trafficking identified by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on trafficking in persons.

Israel is a tier 1 country in the battle against trafficking. Most important, Israel has succeeded in reducing the most severe form of trafficking in women for prostitution, which was prevalent in Israel. That is mainly due to our hard work on all four Ps — prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

Beyond our legislative work and determined enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking, we continue to allocate resources for the rehabilitation of trafficking victims. We have established dedicated shelters, for both women and men, that provide resources, including financial aid, legal assistance, work visas and medical and psychological care. While we would prefer that those shelters not be needed at all, they provide refuge for dozens of people and play an important role in their rehabilitation.

In addition, through the appointment of an anti-trafficking coordinator to liaise between the

Government and non-governmental organizations, we have increased our partnership with civil society. That has proven critical in reducing the scourge of human trafficking and better identifying, and then assisting, victims.

While Israel is encouraged by the progress made by the international community, much work remains to be done. At this appraisal meeting of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, we call on all countries that have yet to ratify the Palermo Protocol on trafficking in persons to do so.

Human traffickers pay no attention to borders. Similarly, as members of the international community, we must transcend borders in our efforts to end human trafficking. By continuing to combine our collective willpower, we can and will find answers, working together to attain our joint goals in the Global Action Plan.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Samsar (Turkey): I would first like to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for organizing this timely meeting. We believe that our deliberations here today will further strengthen our collective efforts to eradicate this heinous crime. Human trafficking constitutes a clear violation of human rights. It is a serious offence to the dignity and integrity of persons and is rightly described as modern-day slavery. Transnational organized crime has immense costs for the social and economic fabric of our societies.

It is a global problem and requires a comprehensive response. Although it can be countered by sophisticated measures, efforts to prevent trafficking and protect trafficked persons remain a challenge. We should therefore address the four pillars — prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships. In order to be relevant, trusted and responsive, we have to develop inclusive, human-rights based and human-centred approaches, including legislative and criminal measures. Our efforts should also be aimed at taking every possible measure in our countries in line with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on combating trafficking in human beings.

While doing that, we should not lose sight of the fact that human trafficking cannot be prevented by Governments acting individually. We should recalibrate and coordinate our ongoing efforts. We have the necessary international instruments in force. Moreover, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants clearly mandates us to do so. Besides, the Assembly will recall that we pledged to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour and end modern slavery and human trafficking in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In that vein, I would like to reiterate our commitment regarding the full implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We believe that it is a solid basis on which to reinforce our legal obligations and a comprehensive guideline of our actions. It will also be instrumental in promoting coordinated and consistent responses at the national, regional and international levels to counter human trafficking.

We all know that, due to the inability of the existing international humanitarian system to respond properly to the needs of people affected by catastrophes and emergencies, criminal networks find fertile ground to exploit the vulnerabilities of migrants by smuggling and trafficking them. Unfortunately, we see how human trafficking has become a very profitable business for terrorist organizations such as Da'esh, the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel and the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK). For example, the human-trafficking activities of the PKK terrorist organization were emphasized in the United States Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report 2017*. As the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, including more than 3.1 million Syrians, Turkey is resolved to undertake necessary measures to prevent the human trafficking, forced labour and slavery of those who had already fled the horrors of conflicts.

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the other hand, given the complex nature of human trafficking, we need a whole-of-society approach to combating organized crime. It is imperative that the private sector and civil society also join Governments' endeavours. With that understanding, we successfully ensured a seat for the private sector during our chairship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2014 and 2015.

In that regard, we would also like to stress the fact that, with a view to effectively combating human trafficking, legal pathways for migrants seeking a decent life must be strengthened. We should make every effort to provide the necessary conditions for tearing down the barriers standing in the way of safe, regular and orderly migration. Let me once again underline that Turkey supports the work towards two global compacts, on migration and for refugees. We have been actively taking part in those processes since their inception. We are confident that, under the able leadership of Special Representative Arbour and High Commissioner Grandi, we will achieve a great deal.

Turkey remains strongly committed to eradicating human trafficking by implementing a progressive approach. With that understanding, we introduced administrative and legal measures to combat the phenomenon through prevention, protection, prosecution and cooperation. Our efforts are focused on enhancing our legislation and improving the implementation of our obligations. In that connection, with the enforcement of our law on foreigners and international protection, the national task force on the fight against human trafficking has been replaced by a coordination commission against human trafficking. The commission has decided to develop and put into practice an updated national action plan on the fight against human trafficking in the coming period. Furthermore, initiatives such as a multilingual toll-free helpline, a victim support programme and a voluntary and safe return programme have been put into practice.

We are party to the relevant international and regional instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocols and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

All of the challenges that we face will take time to be resolved, and advancing in our efforts requires collaborative but decisive action. We need to recognize the different needs of our countries while also ensuring mutual benefits and joint success.

The Acting President: With the consent of the Assembly, I now give the floor to His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

Archbishop Gallagher (Holy See): Since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in 2010, the extent of the crime of human trafficking across the globe has worsened. Thankfully, however, during the same period, the recognition of the dimensions of the problem, the resources required to respond to it and the resolve of Governments, institutions and individuals to combat it have grown.

That is, alas, a meagre consolation, because the gap is still growing between our commitments and efforts and the reality confronting victims, including the serious dangers that persons in vulnerable situations face every day. Finding effective measures to close that gap is the reason we are gathered here.

My delegation would like to structure its assessment on the progress of the Global Plan of Action around the four objectives that underpin it, often referred to as the four Ps — to prevent trafficking in persons by addressing what drives it, to protect and assist victims, to prosecute those involved in the crime of trafficking and to promote partnerships among governmental institutions and all stakeholders to eradicate trafficking and rehabilitate survivors.

There has been significant progress in identifying and addressing many of the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons, in formulating comprehensive policies and programmes and developing educational and awareness-raising campaigns. At the same time, however, several of the drivers of vulnerability have worsened, particularly armed conflicts that provoke enormous humanitarian emergencies, forced migration and the refugee crisis, which have exacerbated the dramatic situations faced by people, especially women and children.

With regard to cultural factors, the political declaration (resolution 72/1) on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons commits the international community to intensifying its efforts to prevent and address, with a view to eliminating the demand that fosters trafficking, especially of women and girls, and all forms of exploitation. Doing so in a resolute way requires a frank and courageous examination of those practices that foster sexually addictive behaviour and the dehumanization of other persons as mere objects of gratification.

Concerning the protection of and assistance for victims, my delegation believes that there is now greater

awareness and legal recognition that the victims of trafficking are indeed victims rather than silent partners or, even worse, perpetrators of crimes. More services are in place to identify and liberate victims from the clutches of modern slavery, regularize their situation and put them on the path to recovery. As a result of the deep traumas they suffer, however, there is need for greater recognition that the work of rehabilitation cannot be a brief programme, but requires a long-term investment in order to provide the healing and training necessary for the victims to begin a normal, productive and autonomous life.

With regard to the prosecution of crimes of trafficking in persons, there have been various advances in terms of formulating adequate legal instruments to investigate, prosecute and punish traffickers, unlocking the financial chains, understanding the connection to other forms of organized crime and corruption, and fostering cooperation at and across borders. At the same time, however, as the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* makes clear, there are still very few convictions and too much impunity.

There has also been progress in the formation of partnerships to strengthen collective action among Governments and governmental agencies, academic institutions and the media, civil society and the private sector. The political declaration specifically mentions partnerships with and among faith-based organizations. The Santa Marta Group, named after the residence of Pope Francis, is an international alliance of police chiefs and bishops who work together at all levels to promote coordination between law enforcement and faith-based organizations in combating human trafficking according to the specific competencies of each.

Similarly, the many groups and networks of Catholic religious sisters, coordinated internationally by Talitha Kum — a network of 22 member organizations in 70 countries — show how faith groups can collaborate with law enforcement authorities and with one another, joining more powerful coalitions with multi-pronged strategies, in the fight against trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery.

In his 2015 message on the World Day of Prayer for Peace, dedicated to the theme of eliminating human trafficking, Pope Francis emphasized the need for partnerships and a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity to remedy the indifference and exploitation that form a polluted human ecology in which human trafficking thrives. He wrote that we are facing a global phenomenon that exceeds the competence of any one community or country. In order to eliminate it, we need a mobilization that is comparable in size to that of the phenomenon itself. The Global Plan of Action is an important part of that mobilization, and this appraisal meeting is a means to help make the Global Plan increasingly effective. Our efforts must be commensurate to the challenge.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.